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ABSTRACT

The "DATAWave" is a biweekly publication of the Assessment Resource Office (ARO) at Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU). Its purpose is to inform the campus community and broader constituencies on assessment issues and practices at ENMU. The university's 10-year history of outcomes assessment is reflected in the topics of the 6 editions of this second volume. Editions, which do not always have a title, contain the following articles or cover these topics: (1) "Outcomes Assessment: ENMU's Next Five Years" (Everett L. Frost), "What's New in Assessment" (Alec M. Testa), and a survey and comments regarding the first volume; (2) "Letter on Assessment" (George Mehaffy), "Preliminary Analysis of Exit Interviews of Graduating Students at Eastern New Mexico University: Spring, 1995" (Judy L. Madewell and Alec M. Testa), and "CAAP [Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency] Results by Term" (Alec M. Testa); (3) "1994 CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Project) Results Compared to National Averages" (Alec M. Testa); (4) "Student Satisfaction Inventory: Comparison of National and Local Scores" (Alec M. Testa); (5) "Assessment Day, November 1, 1995" and ARO WWW page announced; and (6) "Additional Comparisons of CIRP Data" (Alec M. Testa). (Contains five graphs, two tables, and two charts.) (Author/SLD)

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ED 394 997

Volume 2, No. Published by Assessment Resource Office, Eastern New Mexico University

ABSTRACT

The DATAWave is a bi-weekly publication of the Assessment Resource Office (ARO) at Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU). Its purpose is to inform the campus community and broader constituencies on assessment issues and practices at ENMU. ENMU's ten year history of outcomes assessment is reflected in the topics of the six editions of the second volume. Editions cover (authors names follow): Outcomes Assessment: ENMU's Next Five Years (E. Frost), What's New in Assessment (Testa), and survey and comments from volume I; Letter on Assessment (Mehaffy), Preliminary Analysis of Exit Interviews of Graduating Students at Eastern New Mexico University: Spring, 1995 (Madewell and Testa), and CAAP Results By Term (Testa); 1994 CIRP results compared to national averages (Testa); Student Satisfaction Inventory: comparison of national and local scores (Testa); Assessment Day November 1, 1995, and ARO WWW page announced (Testa); and Additional Comparisons of CIRP Data (Testa).

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Volume 2, No.1 Published by Assessment Resource Office, Eastern New Mexico University Date: 9-6-95

Letter to Faculty, Administrators, and Staff by ENMU President, Everett L. Frost

Outcomes Assessment: ENMU's Next Five Years

This summer the important Legislative Finance Committee met at ENMU for several days. Their agenda did not focus on higher education but we were given a few minutes to review ENMU initiatives. One that I am most proud of is the ENMU Student Success Outcomes Program that has been enriched by the recent discipline assessment plan.

There are few days when some article does not cross my desk emphasizing the public, legislative, or federal discontent with higher education. This is now being called the higher education, "Public Disconnect." Somewhere, sometime, we lost the public support for the relative independence and credibility of higher education, the Ivory Tower is disappearing.

One reason is the tremendous growth of higher education. At the time of World War II, only five percent of Americans took one or more postsecondary courses. Now sixty percent do. Thus, our "client" has changed radically in many ways: preparation, resources, demography, motivation, and educational goal. Institutions of two-year and public comprehensive mission are the ones most impacted by this change in participation. In addition, more and more students are mobile, starting at one institution, continuing at another and finishing at another.

During the 1995 legislative session, out of frustration over problems of student mobility relating to course articulation, the legislature passed House Bill 608. The bill assigns significant responsibility to the Commission on Higher Education to coordinate lower division

(article continued on top of page 2)

Survey Results

As in the University at large, the Assessment Resource Office utilizes surveys to assess the services provided to the campus community. In the last edition of the DATAWave for the Spring 1995 semester, members of the campus community were asked to complete a survey. Here are the results:

The DATAWave was mailed to 240 recipients during the semester, of those 91 (38%) responded. Fifty-two respondents were faculty (57.1%), 24 were administration (26.4%), 12 were staff members (13.2%), and 3 identified themselves as professional staff (3.3%).

When asked how often they read the DATAWave, three responded never (3.2%), 25, occasionally (26.9%), 8, half the time (8.6%), 35, frequently (37.6%), and 22 (23.7%) responded always. Nearly 70% of those who responded indicated that they read the DATAWave more than half the time. Administrators were more likely to indicate that they frequently or always read the DATAWave, whereas staff members are more likely to read the newsletter occasionally, and faculty were equally distributed between occasionally, half the time, frequently, and always.

Fifty-eight respondents (63%) indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the information contained in the DATAWave was useful, 21.7% (20) were neutral, and 15.2% (14) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the information was useful. Administrators generally indicated agreement that the information in the DATAWave was useful, whereas response from faculty were mixed.

When asked if the information was presented clearly, 69.5% (64) either agreed or strongly agreed, 12%

(article continued on page 2)

Continued letter from President

degree requirements and now to do the same with associate and baccalaureate degree general education requirements. In one way, it is as if our degree requirement responsibilities have been mediated by CHE authority. Time will tell how this will play out.

Finally, we are confronted by what I call the hidden curriculum. Business leaders and employers are listing certain abilities they seek in graduates. Some of them say they are more important than the courses in a major. These are student skills in creative and analytical thinking, teamwork, communication, motivation, and problem solving. Research indicates that a well structured, general education based curriculum provides some of this preparation but the residential campus's, "whole student life" activities are just as important. This perspective asserts that the successful baccalaureate degree is a combination of curricular and other campus experience. No one asserts that the traditional, academic discipline based requirements do not also have a significant role.

How does all of this relate to a vision of student outcomes assessment for ENMU? For me, it suggests that we need to spend some time ensuring ourselves that we have identified who our real "clients" are and what they perceive their needs are. Then, we have to review our current "academic" outcomes assessment model and expand it to include the broader range of external expectations. What is clear to me, is that in a public university where students are only paying about 17% of the cost of education, the legislators, representing the primarily paying public, are now asserting (perhaps rightfully) a much more intrusive role in monitoring whether public and student needs are met. This can be called an "accountability" perspective which places on US the responsibility to measure and disclose results of our efforts to justify to them the public support and regulatory latitude they grant to us. I believe that the best way to be accountable is to carry on an active program of outcomes assessment which is a formative process for academicians to measure effectiveness for purposes of improving student success. If we are effective in assessment, our accountability measures will reflect this.

A vision of outcomes assessment necessarily will include some tension between this public, summative accountability pressure versus our need to focus on measures that will enhance classroom, campus and pedagogy activity. It will be difficult to convince those who do not share in our perspective that to meet their measurement expectations we need time and a long range perspective. More of our effort will be focused on our "self-regarding" function. Our concept of academic success and faculty expectations will be challenged. Our traditional committee framework may need to adapt. But we are fortunate to work in a small institution which has long had an "Avis" perspective. We are much closer to meeting legislative expectations than some. And our mission and the spirit you portray about our common interests, all contribute to a successful posture for public scrutiny. Thank you for interest in this topic.

Survey Results Continued

were neutral (11), and 17 respondents (18.5%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. As in the previous categories, faculty were more likely to strongly disagree or disagree with this statement than the other response groups.

The majority of respondents, 71.4%, indicated that they would prefer information presented equally in text and in pictures, graphs, and charts. Slightly more, 18.2% versus 10.4%, preferred pictures, graphs, and charts to words.

(article continued on page 3)

Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, their interest in a number of potential topics in future editions of the DATAWave. Responses that were either coded 4 or 5 were combined, and used to determine readers' interests. These are, in rank order: students development and growth at ENMU (71.4%), students values and attitudes at ENMU (64%), student learning as measured by the CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) 62%, general information on how to conduct assessment (39%), theory on student learning (36.9%), and theory on student development and growth (19.5%). Thirty-one people responded with comments regarding the DATAWave. These comments were, of course, both positive and negative, and excerpts of many of these are below.

Assessment information, of course, has little relevance or meaning unless the information is used. As you may have already noticed, the format of the DATAWave has changed; it has gone from two pages to four, and hopefully will make a more judicious use of charts and graphics along with text. A concerted effort will be made to not cram each issue with as much information as possible in order to fully explain analysis procedures. Also, the DATAWave will be published every two weeks as opposed to weekly. It is felt that all of these changes will make the information in the DATAWave more usable and assessable.

As always, your comments, suggestions, and contributions are appreciated and helpful.

DATAWave Survey Comments

- I read a few DATAWave when they first came out--never found anything of interest. Sorry!
- As one reads the DATAWave, one gets the idea that the assessment resource office is telling the administration what they want to hear, rather than telling them how it really is.
- It is great to see the results being distributed to faculty and staff. Assessment is starting to make substantial progress because of the grant/funding.
- Keep the DATAWave "waving!"
- I think most interpretations of data presented in DATAWave are flawed. They overgeneralize and overemphasize even the slightest trends in the data that are obviously not statistically significant (but in most cases we wouldn't know because statistical procedures are rarely reported).
- The more information we have concerning our students, the better equipped we are to work with them.
- I've enjoyed the DATAWave. It has helped my comprehension of some of the student population at ENMU.
- A valuable contribution to the understanding of assessment. Information that we have been collecting for years is now being reported.
- Presentation of quantitative data (tables, figures, etc.) is sloppy.
- DATAWave comes out too often for me to have time to thoroughly examine it each time. Perhaps publishing it less often would give busy faculty actually a chance to read and use the information.
- This is not a useful publication nor is it a good evaluation of anything pertinent.
- I think the DATAWave is useless to most employees. I don't even read it usually.
- Perhaps DATAWave could be published bi-weekly or once a month.

What's New in Assessment

As I began as the Coordinator of the Assessment Resource Office in the fall of 1994, assessment was considered by many a negative and threatening endeavor. Through the academic year, the role of the Assessment Resource Office and outcomes assessment at ENMU became clear. The faculty at Eastern were busy throughout the year with the development of Academic Outcomes Assessment Plans (AOAP's). Providing them the opportunity to articulate what it is that their graduates will learn and how they'll know that they have learned it. I know that when the development of AOAP's began, there was much concern that the process would be completed. I think the entire faculty should be congratulated on the completion of this endeavor. The challenge that lay ahead is the implementation of these AOAP's and the eventual improvement of teaching and learning at Eastern.

Student learning and development is not limited, of course, to the classroom. Students learn and develop in a number of ways throughout their college experience, and furthermore, there is a responsibility to external constituencies, taxpayers, legislators, and accrediting bodies to demonstrate student change and overall effectiveness. It is anticipated that the entire University community will eventually conduct outcomes assessment to demonstrate the overall effectiveness and to determine areas for improvement. This most likely will occur, part and parcel, with the strategic planning process being considered.

Also new in assessment is the establishment, with the assistance of Dr. Jack Moore, of the New Mexico Higher Education Assessment Directors Listserve. This listserve provides members of the New Mexico higher education community the opportunity to talk about assessment issues specific to us. To subscribe send e-mail to listserv@oasis.enmu.edu, with the text 'subscribe your name'. In the near future the Assessment Resource Office hopes to announce the establishment of a homepage on the World Wide Web (WWW). This should be an exciting opportunity for us to share with New Mexico, the nation, and the world our efforts at outcomes assessment.

Many non-faculty members have asked why they receive the DATAWave. It is my belief that the entire University community should be concerned with how students learn and grow, and the DATAWave is mailed to you in order to keep you informed. Should any recipient of the DATAWave wish to be dropped from the distribution list, please contact my office.

Finally, I hope that as you conduct research on student learning, teaching, and development here at ENMU that you would consider sharing your results with other members of the campus community through the DATAWave.

Please feel free to contact me at extension 4313 if I may be of any assistance to your outcomes assessment endeavors and/or with your comments, questions, or concerns. I can also be reached at e-mail at testaa@ziavms.enmu.edu.

by Dr. Alec M. Testa, Coordinator, Assessment Resource Office

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EASTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY

Assessment Resource Office
Station 9

Volume 2, No. 2 Published by Assessment Resource Office, Eastern New Mexico University Date: 9-20-95

Letter on Assessment from Vice-President of Academic Affairs

by Dr. George Mehaffy

Assessment. . .suddenly it's become the new buzz word of higher education. Yet the recent emphasis on assessment must be viewed with cynicism by some. A typical response might be that university professors have been doing assessment for years . . .it's called tests, grades and the other forms of evaluation that professors have always used. So what is all this recent attention to assessment all about?

For us here at Eastern, I hope our assessment effort is a vehicle to get individual faculty to work together to view student achievement in its totality, not just in its individual dimensions in a single class. Because faculty teach students in individual courses, they understandably tend to view student achievement defined by individual class performances. Assessment, as we have begun to use it here at ENMU, measures student achievement across an entire program, and begins with a critical question: what do we want our students to be able to do at the conclusion of their program of study? These measures can be defined by their relationship to national benchmarks, or to our own set of standards locally developed. In either case, these measures should reflect our beliefs about the role of our institution, that critical concept of mission.

In an era of increasing public criticism and demands for accountability for higher education, being able to demonstrate our impact upon students is clearly crucial to maintaining public support. Yet equally important, I believe that assessment is a mechanism to increase dialogue among colleagues, an opportunity to develop a shared vision of our enterprise, and perhaps one way to help us define our collective goals.□

Preliminary Analysis of Exit Interviews of Graduating Students at Eastern New Mexico University: Spring, 1995

by
Judy L. Madewell and Alec M. Testa, Ed.D.
Assessment Resource Office

As part of the University's efforts to assess overall effectiveness and students' perceptions of their educational experience, the four college deans conducted a pilot trial of exit interviews of samples of graduating seniors. While the deans had conducted exit interviews in the past, the interviews conducted during the spring of 1995 were a first attempt at a coordinated effort, utilizing common questions and reporting protocols. The deans forwarded the exit interview responses to the Assessment Resource Office, which was responsible for reviewing and analyzing the data. Exit interview data is anecdotal and subjective in nature, and it is hoped that this will provide broader interpretations of the university's effectiveness than the existing objective institutional data and surveys. These interviews asked students, among other things, about their satisfaction with ENMU, their feelings about the curriculum, and their plans for the future.

Approximately 85 students from 32 major and 15 minor programs responded to the study. Students were not limited to one response, therefore the percentages will not necessarily add up to 100. Of students reporting:

- 61% reported choosing Eastern because of its geographic location,
- 28% because their course of study had a good reputation,

(continued on page 2)

- 18% because of a scholarship offer, and
- 18% because of the low cost of enrollment.

When asked what the strengths of their programs were, answers were overwhelmingly centered around the faculty:

- 54% of students responded that faculty were helpful
- 47% said faculty were accessible
- 31% reported faculty were knowledgeable in their field.

Aspects of the program design that were considered positive were:

- academic courses with 22% of students commenting on them,
- and the level of preparedness the students felt after receiving course work (24%).

Nine percent of students reported weaknesses in communication either between faculty and students, between faculty and department, or between department and the external world. Other responses regarding faculty weaknesses were not enough faculty (9%), as well as unprepared, not accountable, out of date, and inaccessible faculty (each of these reporting at under 5%). Twenty-two percent of respondents reported that the facilities at ENMU suffer deficiencies such as too few lab hours and less than modern equipment being the two highest responses for this question. Problems associated with rotation of courses and scheduling courses (16%) and the need for more courses in the curriculum were mentioned by 44% of the graduating students.

In the matter of general education requirements:

- 65% of students commented positively,
- 49% reported negatively, and
- 27% had their general education course work elsewhere. (Again these total sum to more than 100% as students could respond to more than one response.)

Concerning the issue of diversity education, 47% of students reported having gained the most benefit by merely being exposed to people of other cultures. Thirty-one percent reported having their views of diverse groups broadened, and 38% had positive regard for the way diversity was presented in the classroom. These figures are in contrast to 2% of graduates who had negative feelings about the way diversity was presented in class, and 2% who do not believe diversity should be included in general education requirements. Another positive aspects related to general education, four students also reported being "inspired."

Regarding services at ENMU, 56% of respondents reported that they were treated generally well, while 2% reported being treated generally poorly. Although some comments were recorded on police services, commuting student services, the bookstore, advising, the library, health services, and counseling, the service areas that overwhelmingly had the most comments were registration and financial aid. Twelve percent of students commented negatively about registration, while 20% reported having problems with financial aid. It should also be mentioned that 15% of students offered positive comments about financial aid.

As for plans for the future, 35% of the responses indicated a desire to continue education either now or at some later time, and 85% reported they would be looking for employment. Five percent of students were undecided about their future plans.

As stated at the beginning of this report, this analysis is preliminary, and it is expected that future exit interviews will yield as much and even more valuable information as to how the University is serving the students. The four college deans are working with the Assessment Resource Office to improve the exit interview process. □

CAAP Results By Term

by

Alec M. Testa, Ed.D.

Since the fall semester of 1993, ENMU has administered the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) to students who have completed between 55 and 65 credit hours (rising juniors). The CAAP measures students academic achievement in writing, reading, mathematics, science reasoning and critical thinking (see side bar for scale descriptions). The CAAP replaced the previously administered COMP (College Outcomes Measure Program).

In this brief analysis, CAAP results on the five scales will be examined by semester of administration. One might assume that the average of scale scores would increase from term to term, but this is not the case as evidenced here (see charts on page 4). Writing scale scores showed small increases, and then declined. Reading scale scores can best be described as unsteady, likewise for critical thinking scores. The scores in science reasoning have declined over the five administrations, and scale scores for mathematics declined and recently show some improvements.

An attempt is not made here to explain these results, none is readily apparent. It is my intention to share these results with the campus community so that others might offer explanations, and seek responses that may lead to enhanced student learning.

A limitation of this endeavor is that unequal numbers of students are captured for assessment each term. In the first administration, fall of 1993, 556 students participated; 95 participated in the spring of 1994, 17 in the summer of 1994, 148 in the fall of 1994, and 76 in the spring of 1995. Beginning with this semester, the University will once again administer the CAAP to all rising juniors on one given day—Assessment Day, scheduled for November first.

It seems, as indicative of previous assessment efforts, that a more concerted effort is required in using the results of our assessment efforts. I would like to invite members of the campus community to suggest how CAAP results might be better used to improve curriculum and/or additional analyses of CAAP results that may add insight to student learning. As always, I can be reached at extension 4313 or by email at testaa@ziavms.enmu.edu □

Description of CAAP Test Scales

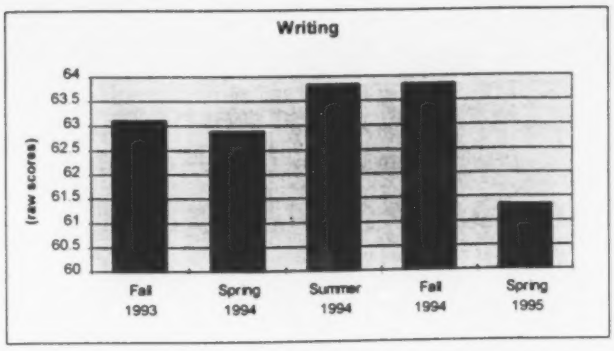
Writing: Measures students' understanding of the conventions of standard written English in punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, strategy, organization, and style. Spelling, vocabulary, and rote recall of rules of grammar are not tested. A range of passage types is used to provide a variety of rhetorical situations.

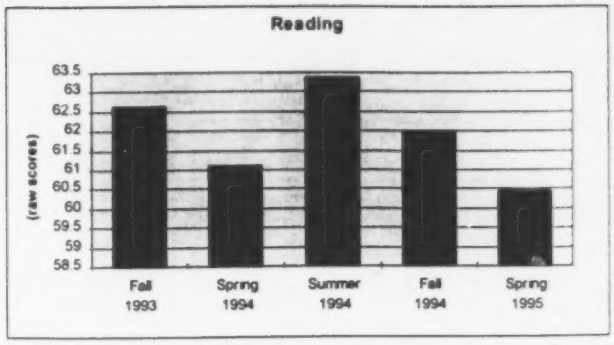
Reading: Measures reading comprehension as a product of skill in referring, reasoning, and generalizing. The test items require the student to derive meaning from several texts by (1) referring to what is explicitly stated; (2) reasoning to determine implicit meanings; and (3) drawing conclusions, comparisons, and generalizations beyond the test.

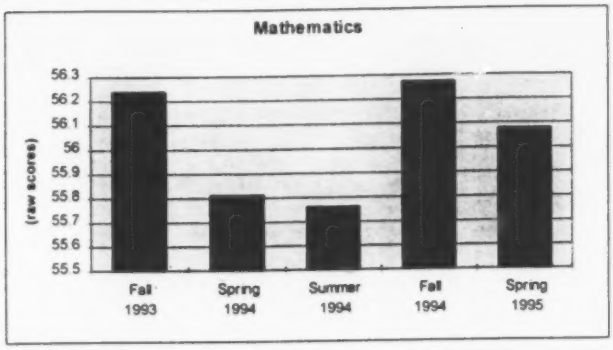
Mathematics: Measures students' proficiency in mathematical reasoning. The test assesses students' proficiency in solving mathematical problems encountered in many postsecondary curricula. It emphasizes quantitative reasoning rather than the memorization of formulas. The content areas tested include pre-, elementary, intermediate, and advanced algebra, coordinate geometry, trigonometry, and introductory calculus.

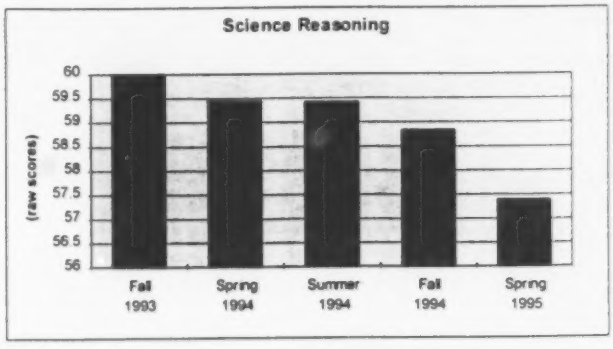
Science Reasoning: Measures students' skills in scientific reasoning. The contents of the Science Reasoning Test are drawn from biology, chemistry, physics, and the physical sciences (e.g., geology, astronomy, and meteorology). The test emphasizes scientific reasoning skills rather than recall of scientific content or a high level of skill in mathematics or reading. A stimulus may conform to one of the three different formats: data representation, research summaries, and conflicting viewpoints.

Critical Thinking: Measures students' skills in clarifying, analyzing, evaluating, and extending arguments. An argument is defined as a sequence of statements that includes a claim that one of the statements, the conclusion, follows from the other statements.









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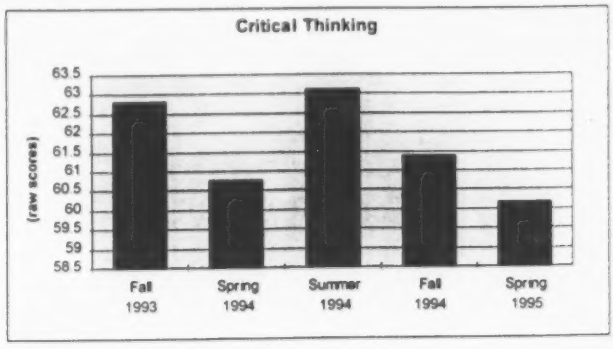

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Eastern New Mexico University has participated in the Higher Education Research Institutes' (HERI) Cooperative Institutional Research Project (CIRP) Freshman Survey since 1987. In 1994 the CIRP Freshman Survey was administered to 237,777 freshmen entering 461 two-year and four-year institutions. The national results reported in this issue of the DATAWave were reported in the 1995 Almanac issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Members of the Eastern community who are interested in additional analysis of CIRP data for any number of variables should contact the Assessment Resource Office at extension 4313 or by email (testaa@ziavms.enmu.edu).

In comparing the results of the Eastern sample (n=174, drawn last year from College Success Courses) some observations seen in the data are: a greater proportion of Hispanic students, an incoming student body that is more politically conservative, a lower reporting of parents combined income, and lower expectations for obtainment of graduate or professional degrees. Students reasons for deciding to attend a college or university were more or less consistent with those of the national sample, but in choosing Eastern in particular, students were attracted by financial assistance, low tuition cost, and that they were recruited to attend here. Students in the national sample were more likely to choose their institution based on good academic reputation, availability of social activities, special education programs, and the job opportunities available to graduates.

Eastern students self reported that they thought they would be less likely to graduate with honors, make a "B" average, and be satisfied with college. They were more likely to fail one or more classes, work full-time while attending college, get married, and need extra time to complete a degree. In the year prior to attending ENMU, Eastern students were more likely to have discussed religion, spoken a language other than English at home, failed to complete homework on time, drank beer, smoked cigarettes, and felt overwhelmed and depressed. When surveyed on their views towards a number of topics, Eastern students were more conservative than the national sample. Regarding future goals, Eastern students were more likely to be interested in being successful in a business of their own, and less likely to be interested in developing a meaningful philosophy of life, and keeping up-to-date with political affairs.

This is just a brief overview of the data that follows on the next four pages. It would be interesting for those members of Eastern's community with longer tenures to comment on these findings: are they similar or dissimilar to what would be predicted? CIRP data provides many opportunities to investigate our student body, and faculty, staff, and administrators are encouraged to contact the Assessment Resource Office to use the data to inform their own practice and research. □

	National	ENMU
Racial and ethnic background:		
American Indian	2.1 %	5.2 %
Black	10.0	2.9
White	81.5	52.9
Mexican-American	2.3	31.6
Puerto Rican-American	0.7	1.1
Other Latino	1.3	2.3
Other	6.1	4.0
Estimated parental income:		
Less than $6,000	3.4 %	6.1 %
$6,000-$9,999	3.3	7.3
$10,000-$14,999	4.9	6.1
$15,000-$19,999	4.7	7.9
$20,000-$24,999	6.2	11.6
$25,000-$29,999	6.0	5.5
$30,000-$39,999	11.9	15.9
$40,000-$49,999	12.8	11.0
$50,000-$59,999	11.7	10.4
$60,000-$74,999	12.5	9.1
$75,000-$99,999	9.8	3.0
$100,000-$149,999	7.0	3.7
$150,000-$199,999	2.6	1.8
$200,000 or more	3.3	.6

	National	ENMU
Number of other colleges applied to for admission this year:		
None	32.1 %	40.1 %
One	15.3	20.3
Two	16.6	16.9
Three	14.6	11.0
Four	8.9	7.0
Five	5.5	1.7
Six or more	7.0	2.9
College attended is student's:		
First choice	72.4	67.2
Second choice	20.0	25.3
Third choice	4.9	5.7
Other	2.7	1.7
Highest academic degree planned:		
None	0.8	6.9
Vocational certificate	0.9	2.0
Associate (or equivalent)	5.5	2.9
Bachelor's	26.8	58.8
Master's	37.1	21.6
Doctorate	27.3	2.9
Other	1.8	4.9
Political Views:		
Far left	2.3	3.0
Liberal	22.7	17.5
Middle of the road	52.6	57.8
Conservative	20.9	18.1
Far right	1.5	3.6
Reasons noted as very important in deciding to go to college:		
My parents wanted me to go	35.2	39.5
I could not find a job	7.7	8.1
Wanted to get away from home	18.6	20.9
To be able to get a better job	77.3	76.9
To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	59.4	60.1
To improve my reading and study skills	41.2	42.8
There was nothing better to do	3.1	5.8
To make me a more cultured person	36.5	35.8
To be able to make more money	72.4	73.4
To learn more about things that interest me	73.0	72.3
To prepare myself for graduate or professional school	55.7	51.7
A mentor or role model encouraged me to go	13.7	20.2
Reasons noted as very important in selecting college attended:		
Relatives' wishes	9.6	8.1
Teachers' advice	4.5	5.2
College has a very good academic reputation	48.8	27.2
College has a good reputation for its social activities	21.7	12.2
Offered financial assistance	29.6	46.5
College offers special education programs	21.1	13.9
Low tuition	29.0	45.1
Advice of high-school counselor	7.7	5.8
Advice of private college counselor	2.3	1.7
Wanted to live near home	21.0	19.7
Friend's suggestion	9.7	6.9
Recruited by college	4.2	8.7
Recruited by athletic department	6.1	8.1
Graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools	25.8	12.7

(continued on page 3)

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	National	ENMU
Graduates get good jobs	42.3 %	26.6 %
Religious affiliation/orientation of college	5.3	1.7
Size of college	35.6	38.2
Not accepted anywhere else	2.3	2.9
Local college, no other options	4.5	5.8
Students estimate chances are very good that they will:		
Change major field	12.5	10.6
Change career choice	11.6	10.5
Fail one or more courses	1.1	4.7
Graduate with honors	16.2	9.5
Be elected to student office	3.3	4.7
Get a job to help pay college expenses	38.7	41.5
Work full-time while attending college	5.5	11.8
Join a social fraternity, sorority, or club	15.5	21.3
Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics	15.8	16.0
Be elected to an academic honor society	8.8	5.9
Make at least a B average	46.4	34.7
Need extra time to complete degree	8.4	13.6
Get bachelor's degree	65.7	68.0
Participate in student protests or demonstrations	5.4	5.9
Drop out temporarily	1.1	4.1
Drop out permanently	0.7	1.8
Transfer to another college	13.4	17.6
Be satisfied with college	46.7	38.1
Get married while in college	5.9	15.2
Participate in volunteer or community-service work	17.3	12.4
Participate actively in religious activities	16.6	15.9
Activities in the past year:		
Attended a religious service	82.6	82.0
Was bored in class	33.0	35.6
Participated in organized demonstrations	40.4	43.3
Failed to complete homework on time	66.2	71.8
Tutored another student	49.2	38.1
Studied with other students	85.3	82.7
Was a guest in teacher's home	27.8	26.2
Smoked cigarettes	12.5	17.8
Drank beer	53.2	66.7
Drank wine or liquor	52.5	56.9
Stayed up all night	80.7	75.0
Spoke a language other than English at home	7.1	14.4
Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do	24.1	32.8
Felt depressed	9.5	13.2
Performed volunteer work	70.1	64.3
Came late to class	54.8	58.1
Played a musical instrument	37.8	31.6
Asked a teacher for advice after class	19.2	17.2
Overslept and missed class or appointment	29.9	54.6
Discussed politics	16.0	12.1
Visited a museum or art gallery	57.3	56.6
Missed school due to illness	4.6	4.0
Discussed religion	21.1	79.2
Agree strongly or somewhat that:		
The federal government is not doing enough to protect the consumer from faulty goods and services	71.8	72.0
The federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution	84.0	80.6
The federal government should raise taxes to reduce the deficit	24.7	18.5
There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals	73.0	72.2

(continued on page 4)

	National	ENMU
Abortion should be legal	59.7 %	52.4 %
The death penalty should be abolished	20.1	16.8
If two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for only a very short time	43.2	38.7
The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family	25.0	29.6
Marijuana should be legalized	32.1	24.9
It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships	33.9	40.7
Employers should be allowed to require drug testing of employees or job applicants	80.6	81.8
The best way to control AIDS is through widespread, mandatory testing	62.3	67.1
The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns	79.9	73.2
Just because a man thinks that a woman has "led him on" does not entitle him to have sex with her	89.5	82.5
A national health-care plan is needed to cover everybody's medical costs	70.5	66.7
Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America	17.1	18.5
The federal government should do more to discourage energy consumption	71.9	63.3
Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society	32.6	35.5
Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now	67.3	62.5
Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus	62.4	60.7
Colleges would be improved if organized sports were de-emphasized	30.2	27.8
People should not obey laws which violate their personal values	35.6	31.6
Objectives considered essential or very important:		
Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts	11.1	11.1
Becoming an authority in my field	65.2	64.9
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field	53.2	50.0
Influencing the political structure	18.7	14.1
Influencing social values	40.2	47.9
Raising a family	70.6	74.3
Having administrative responsibility for the work of others	39.0	38.6
Being very well-off financially	73.7	73.9
Helping others who are in difficulty	61.7	72.3
Making a theoretical contribution to science	16.8	16.9
Writing original works	12.6	14.0
Creating artistic work	12.4	11.7
Becoming successful in a business of my own	40.9	45.3
Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment	24.3	24.0
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	42.7	39.1
Participating in a community-action program	24.4	26.0
Helping to promote racial understanding	35.8	37.6
Keeping up to date with political affairs	31.9	24.7
Becoming a community leader	31.0	31.1

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In the spring of 1995, the Student Satisfaction Inventory was administered to more than 1,000 students here at Eastern New Mexico University. Scale scores and national norms have been previously reported in the DATAWave. In this issue, a more detailed examination of the instructional effectiveness scale is reported. The full text for each of the questions, local means and standard deviations and national comparisons can be found in Table 1 on page 4. Pages 2 and 3 contain box plots that graphically display the results. Box plots are summary plots based on the median quartiles and extreme values. Box plots are formed from "boxes" which contain the 50 percent of values falling between the 25th and 75th percentiles, and from "whiskers", which are lines that extend from the box to the highest and lowest values excluding outliers. A vertical line across the box indicates the median.

Examination of Chart 1 will show that with the exceptions of questions 3, 61, and 70 students' responses are consistent and positively skewed. Generally this is consistent with all item responses with regards to importance by the ENMU sample who tend to rate all items as being important. Questions concerning "faculty care about me as an individual," "adjunct faculty are competent classroom instructors," and "graduate teaching assistants are competent classroom instructors" are in general less important than the other items questioned. It may be more accurate to report that these items are important, but there is more variance in the students' responses.

This and previous examinations of the importance data continue to demonstrate that all items appear to be important to ENMU students. An examination of students' satisfaction with these questions may provide more useful information. Areas where students appear to be most satisfied are questions 8, 16, 39, 58, 65, and 68. In fact, the responses to questions 8 and 16, which asked students about the content of their courses being valuable and the excellence of their instruction, compared most favorably with the national norms. In the former question, ENMU rating is equal to the national mean and in the latter, it slightly exceeds the national mean. The box graphs for the remaining strong areas show that the responses are positively skewed and that students tend to agree highly in this area. More normally distributed responses are seen for questions 3, 25, 41, 47, 53, 61, 69, and 70. This greater variance or movement towards normalcy perhaps indicates a cohort of less satisfied students. These questions address faculty caring, faculty fairness, commitment to academic excellence, faculty consideration of student differences, variety of courses, adjunct teachers, and teaching assistants. Perhaps these concerns could be grouped into faculty-student relationships and programmatic concerns.

Anecdotal data and some survey data support that faculty-student relationships are one of the strongest parts of the Eastern experience. Assuming that this is true, and that the evidence indicates that some students feel otherwise, improving faculty-student relationships may be a relatively low cost endeavor. Perhaps more costly may be the concerns around adjunct faculty, graduate assistants, and availability of classes which would require additional resources.

As in the past, these results are offered, in part, to inform the ENMU community. They are also offered in order to hear feedback from members of the administration, faculty, and professional staff. Comments are of course again, really appreciated. These results may have more meaning to you when broken down by any one of a number of demographic variables (i.e., student ethnicity, class level, college, major, age, gender).

If you would like more information on instructional effectiveness, other student satisfaction inventory scales, or assessment results, please feel free to contact the Assessment Resource Office, or me personally, at extension 4313 or testaa@ziavms.enmu.edu □

by Dr. Alec M. Testa
Coordinator, Assessment Resource Office

Chart 1

STUDENT SATISFACTION INVENTORY
INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IMPORTANCE SCALE
RESPONSES BY SCALE QUESTION

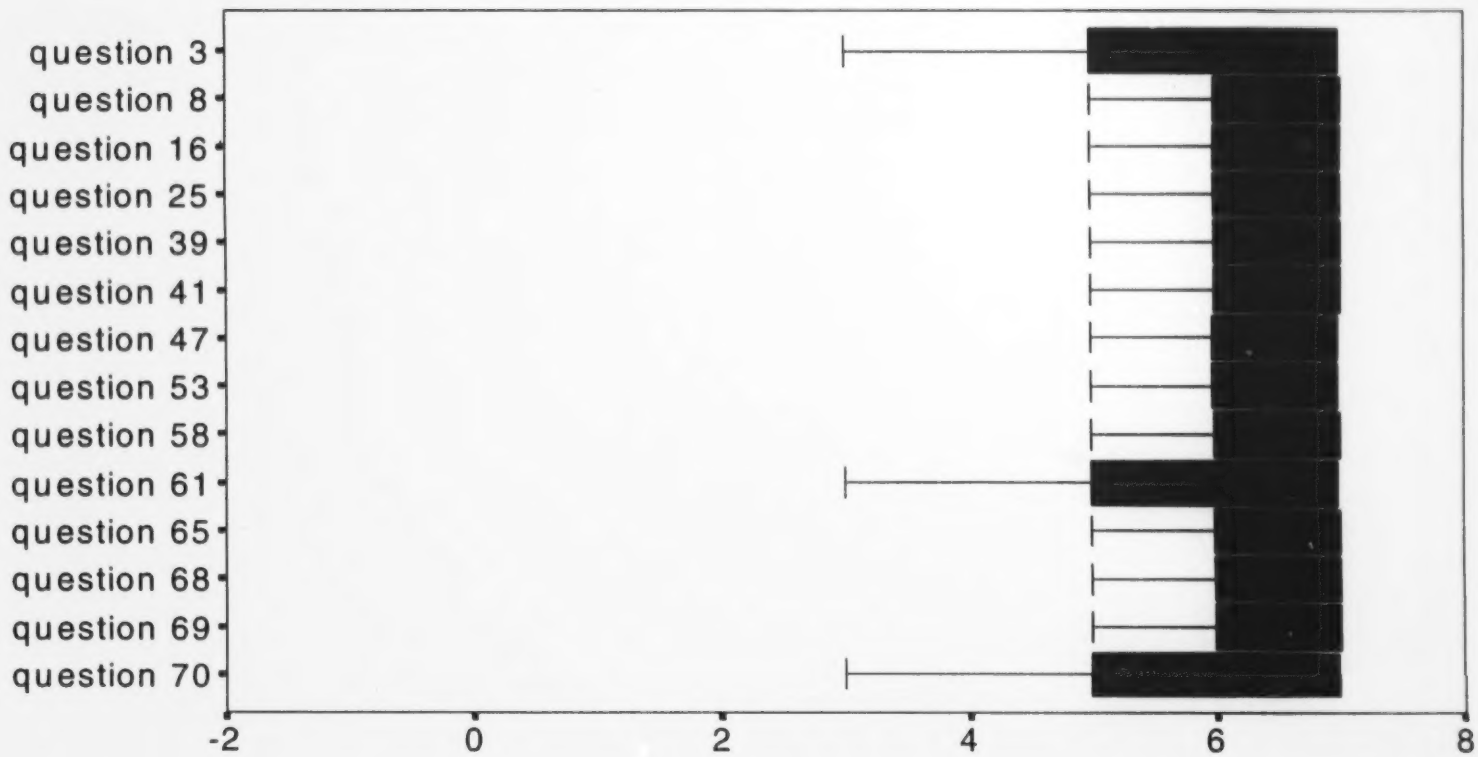
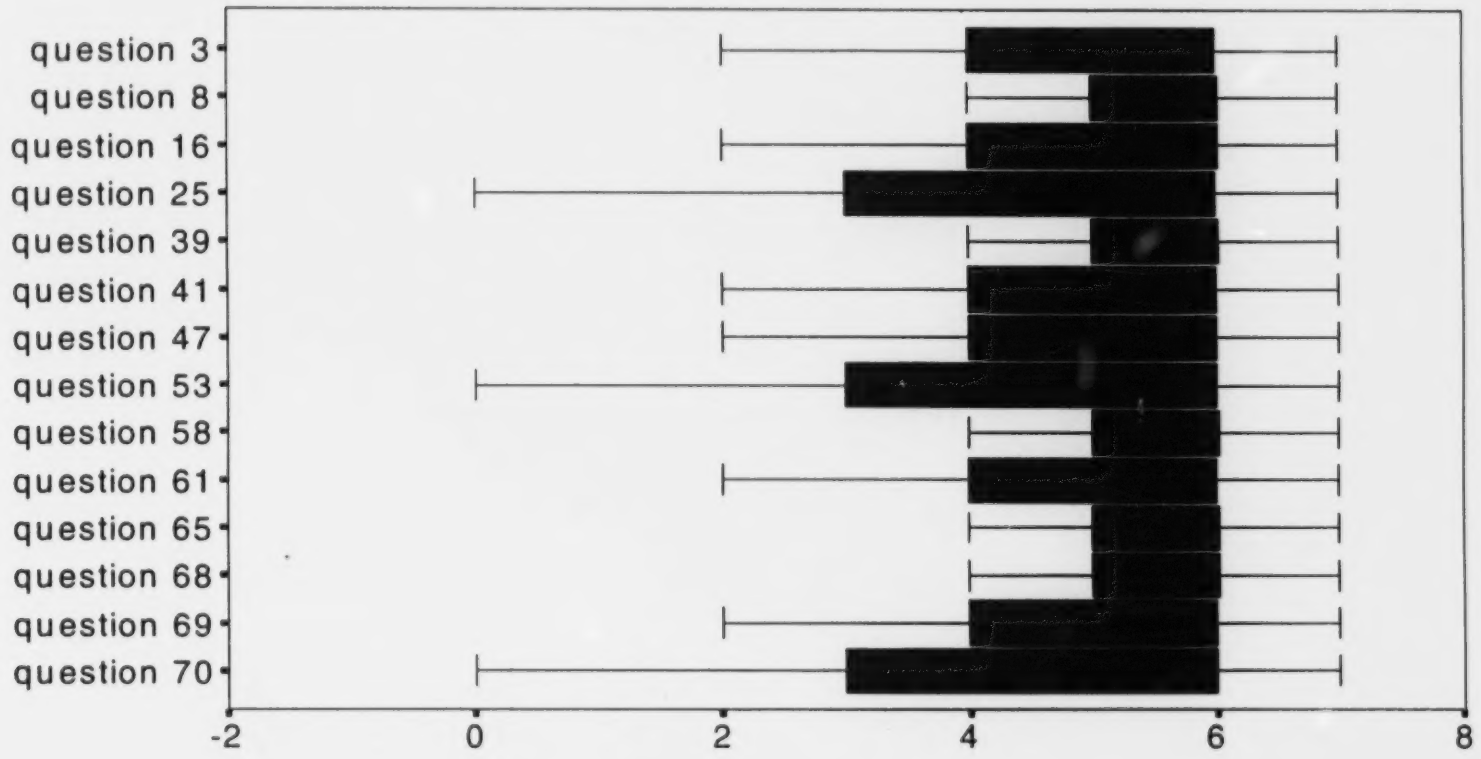


Chart 2

STUDENT SATISFACTION INVENTORY
INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS SATISFACTION SCALE
RESPONSES BY SCALE QUESTION



	Our Institution Mean Eastern New Mexico University Main			National Group Mean 4-Year Public Institutions			Mean Difference (Satisfaction)
Scale	Importance	Satisfaction/SD	Performance Gap	Importance	Satisfaction/SD	Performance Gap	Our Inst - Nat'l Group
INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS	6.34	5.01 / 1.00	1.33	6.28	5.12 / 0.95	1.16	-0.11[1]
3. Faculty care about me as an individual.	6.02	4.89 / 1.45	1.13	6.07	4.84 / 1.51	1.23	0.05
8. The content of the courses within my my major is valuable.	6.62	5.30 / 1.43	1.32	6.51	5.30 / 1.37	1.21	0.00
16. The instruction in my major field is excellent.	6.61	5.34 / 1.44	1.27	6.49	5.26 / 1.41	1.23	0.08
25. Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.	6.38	4.59 / 1.63	1.79	6.37	4.95 / 1.53	1.42	-0.36[1]
39. I am able to experience intellectual growth here.	6.29	5.34 / 1.28	0.95	6.30	5.38 / 1.25	0.92	-0.04
41. There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus.	6.28	4.92 / 1.37	1.36	6.28	5.13 / 1.36	1.15	-0.21[3]
47. Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course.	6.23	4.80 / 1.48	1.43	6.20	4.83 / 1.51	1.37	-0.03
53. Faculty take into consideration student differences as they teach a course.	6.16	4.52 / 1.59	1.64	6.05	4.66 / 1.53	1.39	-0.14[2]
58. The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.	6.56	5.21 / 1.42	1.35	6.50	5.29 / 1.35	1.21	-0.08
61. Adjunct faculty are competent as classroom instructors.	6.05	4.83 / 1.33	1.22	5.94	4.93 / 1.34	1.01	-0.10[1]
65. Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.	6.37	5.32 / 1.41	1.05	6.34	5.46 / 1.40	0.88	-0.14[2]
68. Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field.	6.52	5.52 / 1.27	1.00	6.52	5.62 / 1.26	0.90	-0.10[1]
69. There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.	6.44	4.88 / 1.60	1.56	6.39	5.23 / 1.49	1.16	-0.35[3]
70. Graduate teaching assistants are competent as classroom instructors.	6.16	4.67 / 1.58	1.49	5.89	4.74 / 1.48	1.15	-0.07

[1] Difference statistically significant at the .05 level [2] Difference statistically significant at the .01 level [3] Difference statistically significant at the .001 level

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Assessment Day November 1, 1995

Eastern New Mexico University's history of Academic Outcomes Assessment began in 1986. From then until 1993, the University participated in Testing Day. Testing Day, as I understand it, was an opportunity to cancel classes for the day so that freshman and junior students could participate in the College Outcomes Measures Program (COMP). When it was decided to switch from the COMP to the CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency), Testing Day was discontinued.

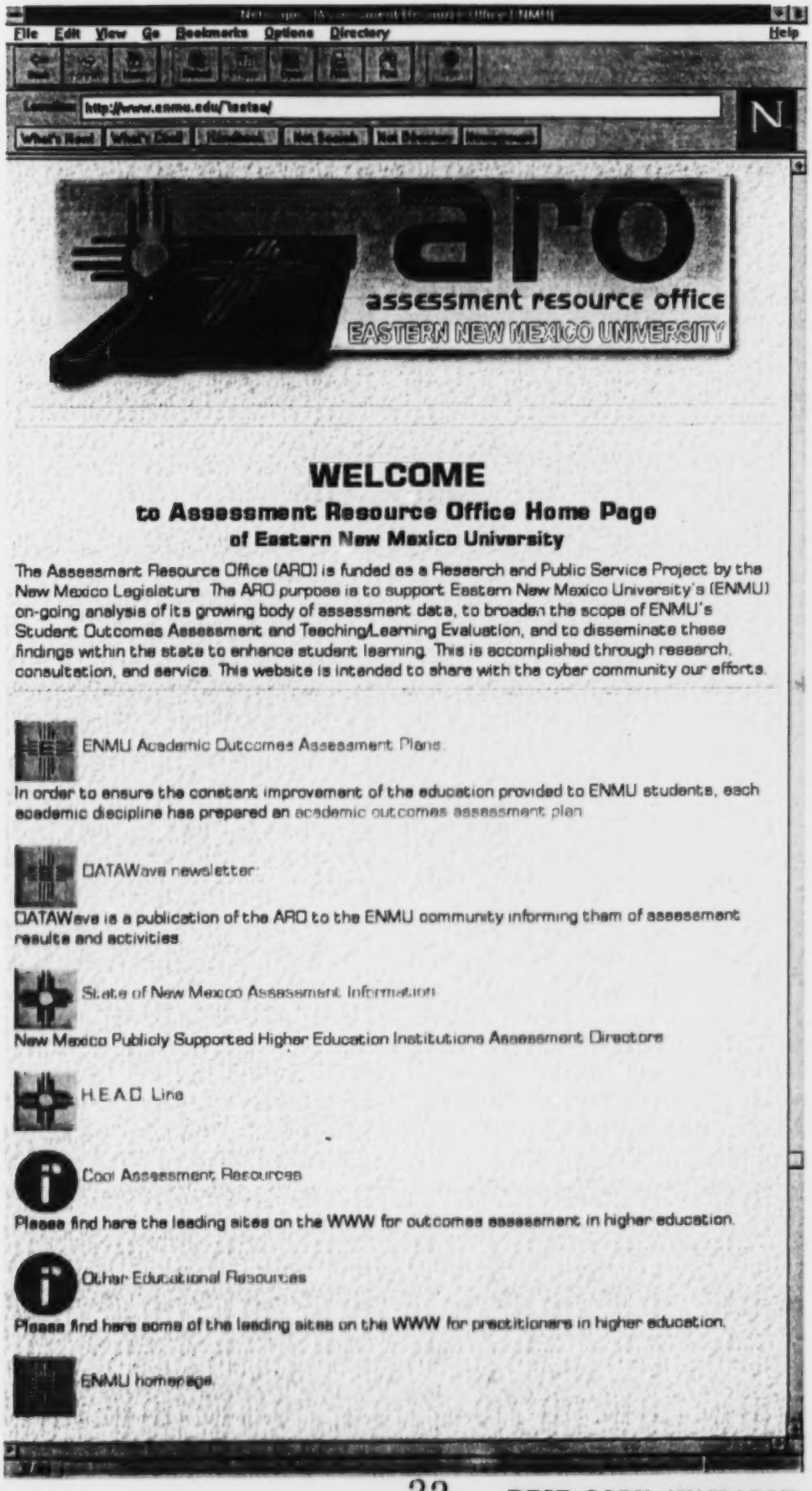
Over the last two years of CAAP testing, it has become increasingly difficult to arrange for the administration throughout the semester to assess the rising junior cohort (students with between 55 and 65 credit hours). Those responsible for planning and implementing the CAAP—Counseling and Testing, Planning and Analysis, and the Assessment Resource Office, met in June to address the problem. With cooperation from Dr. Mehaffy, it was determined that Assessment Day should be held once a semester. However, unlike Testing Day, assessment for general education will only be one part of the day's events. Ideally, Assessment Day provides an opportunity for the University to take a break once a semester from usual activities to respond to planning and effectiveness issues. Please see the day's schedule on page 4.

In Academic Year 1994-1995 Academic Affairs responded to the North Central Association requirement that all its member institutions have in place a plan for the assessment of academic outcomes. The Assessment Committee was instrumental in preparing the response to this requirement through the development of our overall plan, and the academic units responded by preparing an Academic Outcomes Assessment Plan for each major at the undergraduate and graduate level. Academic Departments/Schools will be using Assessment Day to either implement or plan for implementation of their plans.

When President Frost formed the Assessment Committee, part of the charge that was given was to assist in the development of outcomes assessment measures for all units at the University. Outcomes Assessment Plans consist of a goal statement which flows from the University's Mission Statement, intended outcomes and objectives, assessment criteria and procedures, and an implementation plan. These plans are an opportunity to demonstrate the important ways that all units at the University support the Mission, and to evaluate how we can improve services to our various constituencies. Business Affairs, Student Affairs, and Community Relations will be using Assessment Day to begin the development of their Plans.

There is indeed some overlap between Assessment Activities, Strategic Planning, and Self-Study. They are however distinct process, but processes that should inform and infuse one another. For example, the development of a goal statement and intended outcomes and objectives will enhance the Self-Study process of articulating purposes and how the unit supports these purposes.

Finally, the programs and activities planned for this Assessment Day should grow and expand in future endeavors. I believe that we will learn more about what works, and how to do it. As always, suggestions and feedback from the campus community are welcomed. For more information, contact Dr. Alec Testa at the Assessment Resource Office, 562-4313, or email testaa@ziavms.enmu.edu. □


File Edit View Go Bookmarks Options Directory Help
http://www.enmu.edu/~lastaa/
aro
assessment resource office
EASTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY
WELCOME
to Assessment Resource Office Home Page
of Eastern New Mexico University
The Assessment Resource Office (ARO) is funded as a Research and Public Service Project by the New Mexico Legislature. The ARO purpose is to support Eastern New Mexico University's (ENMU) on-going analysis of its growing body of assessment data, to broaden the scope of ENMU's Student Outcomes Assessment and Teaching/Learning Evaluation, and to disseminate these findings within the state to enhance student learning. This is accomplished through research, consultation, and service. This website is intended to share with the cyber community our efforts.
ENMU Academic Outcomes Assessment Plans
In order to ensure the constant improvement of the education provided to ENMU students, each academic discipline has prepared an academic outcomes assessment plan.
DATAWave newsletter
DATAWave is a publication of the ARO to the ENMU community informing them of assessment results and activities.
State of New Mexico Assessment Information
New Mexico Publicly Supported Higher Education Institutions Assessment Directors
H.E.A.D. Line
Cool Assessment Resources
Please find here the leading sites on the WWW for outcomes assessment in higher education.
Other Educational Resources
Please find here some of the leading sites on the WWW for practitioners in higher education.
ENMU homepage

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The Assessment Resource Office (ARO) at Eastern New Mexico University is pleased to announce the availability of its World Wide Web homepage. It is hoped that this will allow the ARO to more effectively meet its purposes of supporting outcomes assessment here at Eastern, disseminating Eastern's expertise and experience in outcomes assessment, and serve as a resource to the campus community in improving our outcomes assessment efforts. In this brief article, I'd like to share with you in some detail what you will find.

In Academic Year 1994-1995 each department/school at Eastern developed a Academic Outcomes Assessment Plan (AOAP). These can all be found under the first link "ENMU Academic Outcomes Assessment Plans." While these may be convenient for the faculty here, it has been extremely useful already in sharing our efforts with others. For example, I belong to several listserves that discuss assessment and effectiveness issues. When others have asked for specific examples on conducting outcomes assessment, I have been able to point them to what we do.

The next link leads the "surfer" to back issues of this publication. An important WWW lesson learned here. To maximize their usage, and to minimize downloading time, each DATAWave is being rewritten in html. Therefore, only a handful of back issues are now available. In the future, I hope that more on outcomes assessment and more on how we have improved Eastern through outcomes assessment will be available here. I also hope that more members of the University community will share their assessment experience in the DATAWave, and eventually through the internet.

The next two links address state-wide concerns. At the moment the "State of New Mexico Assessment Information" contains only a list of assessment directors in New Mexico. In the future not only will it contain information in our upcoming Assessment Conference, but, hopefully, information on other state-wide initiatives as well. To date there has been one issue of the N.M.H.E.A.D.Line (New Mexico Higher Education Assessment Directors Line). This newsletter is published once a semester. The fall 1995 issue will be available November 15.

"Cool Assessment Resources" contains the most useful sites available on outcomes assessment. My favorites are the ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation, and the handy "test locator" available at that site, and the Federal Government Internet Educational Resources. The latter offers a wide array of materials, and in particular interest to assessment professionals are links to the homepages of the National Centers of Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (NCTLA), the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), and the Center for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation (CREATE).

"Other Educational Resources" offers some of my favorite sites on education on the WWW. These include The Higher Education Research Meta-Index, Internet Resources for Institutional Research, and the U.S. Department of Education homepage.

Please enjoy a "spin" around our new homepage, and I look forward to learning of you comments and suggestions for its improvement. □

DATAWave
published biweekly by the Assessment Resource Office
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Assessment Day Calendar
Fall, 1995

Time	Activity
8:00	• CAAP faculty proctors report for training
8:30	• Rising juniors participate in CAAP
9:00	• Student Affairs, Business Affairs, Community Relations, and Planning & Analysis Units meet to: ♦ Develop goal statement related to University's Revised Mission Statement ♦ Develop 3-5 intended outcomes and objectives related to their goal statement ♦ Develop, as time permits, 2 or more assessment criteria and procedures for each intended outcome and objective
varies	• Some Academic Departments will be conducting their Academic Outcomes Assessment Efforts
10:00	• Academic Departments/Schools meet to: ♦ Review AOAP's ♦ Discuss AOAP Review Committee Comments ♦ Plan for implementation of AOAP's ♦ Ensure that plans are made to adjust program curriculum as a result of assessment
Noon or 1:00	• Meetings of College Councils to allow chairs/directors to discuss and report their morning departmental/school meetings
1:00	• Departmental managers meet with respective Vice-President or Executive Director to report and share their progress in the development of outcomes assessment plans
2:00	• Mission Review Discussion led by Self-study Committee

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Volume 2, No. 6 Published by Assessment Resource Office, Eastern New Mexico University Date: 11-29-95

Recently, while 'surfing the net,' I came across the following press release from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. In this issue of the DATAWave, I thought that I would compare the results from our students here at Eastern to those at other two-year and four-year colleges and universities. As reported in a previous edition of the DATAWave, the sample of freshman students for 1994 was taken primarily from ACS courses. This may, or may not, have been the most representative group. Where 1994 responses differ significantly from previous years, I will comment. I enjoy the opportunity to respond to issues you may see in the professional literature (if you read higher education sources) or popular press. It is my hope that you will also find this of interest. You will find my comments and Eastern's results throughout in italics.—amt

1994 NATIONAL FRESHMAN SURVEY FINDS INTEREST IN POLITICS AT ALL-TIME LOW

This year's college freshmen are less involved and less interested in politics than any previous entering class, according to the 29th annual national survey of entering freshmen conducted by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute.

Nineteen ninety-four was the eighth year that ENMU participated in the CIRP Freshman Survey.

Only 31.9 percent of the Fall 1994 freshmen—lowest in the history of the 29 year survey—say that "keeping up with political affairs" is an important goal in life. This compares to 42.4 percent in 1990 and 57.8 in 1966.

In 1994, 24.7% of ENMU students believed it was important to keep up with politics, down from 1993 (38.8%). In 1990, 40.9% of students agreed in the importance of keeping up with political affairs.

"Considering that the figure from last year—a non-election year— was 37.6 percent, the sharp drop observed during this recent election year is all the more remarkable," says survey director Alexander W. Astin, professor of higher education at UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies.

The annual freshman survey, conducted under the continuing sponsorship of the American Council on Education, is the nation's longest-standing and most comprehensive assessment of student attitudes and plans. This year's survey covered 333,703 students at 670 two-year and four-year colleges and universities and inquired about such concerns as grade inflation, future career interests, financing college education and student stress.

In 1994, 174 ENMU students participated in the survey. Since 1987, nearly 2,500 ENMU students have taken part in the CIRP Freshman Survey.

Political Activism

On the question of politics, the percentage of freshmen who say they frequently "discuss poli-

tics" also reached its lowest point ever this past fall, dropping to 16.0 percent, compared to 18.8 percent the previous year and 24.6 percent in 1992. The highest level of political discussion was registered at 29.9 percent during the 1968 election year.

Likewise, the proportion of students at ENMU was the lowest ever (12.1%), compared with 17% the previous year, and 24.5% in 1992. Nineteen ninety-two, an election year, is the year with the highest measure in ENMU's years of participation in the CIRP Freshman Survey.

Regarding political labels, the number of students calling themselves "middle-of-the-road" was up while the number of liberals and conservatives was down. Support for the legalization of marijuana increased for the fifth straight year, up to 32.1 percent, compared to 28.2 percent in 1993 and 16.7 percent in 1989. "Crime and punishment" issues showed conservative trends including support for abolishing capital punishment, which reached its lowest point in the history of the survey: 20.1 percent, compared to 22.1 percent in 1993 and its high point of 57.6 percent in 1971.

The proportion of conservative, "middle-of-the-road," and liberal students has remained consistent at ENMU (in 1994, 21.7%, 57.8%, and 20.5% respectively). The support for legalization of marijuana has risen since 1987 (16.7%) among incoming ENMU freshmen (24.9% in 1994; 28.1% in 1993; 14% in 1989). Trends regarding views towards the death penalty are not so clear here at Eastern (the results fluctuate). In 1994, 16.8% were in favor of abolishing the death penalty, which was not as low as 1989 (15.9%) or 1993 (14.9%).

Grade Inflation

On the academic side, high school "grade inflation" continued unabated, with the number of students reporting "A" averages reaching an all-time high of 28.1 percent, compared to 27.0 in 1993 and only 12.5 percent in 1969. The number reporting "C" averages from high school dropped to an all-time low of 15.5 percent. One-third of the students report that they were frequently "bored in class" during high school.

No such trends towards grade inflation are seen in the results of ENMU participants, and due to sampling concerns, 1994 represents the lowest year on record (16.8%). The percentage of students with "A" averages was 22.9% in 1993. The proportion of "C" average students in 1994 was 25.4%, which is slightly less than in previous years. Thirty-five percent of ENMU incoming freshmen responded that they were frequently bored in class during high school. Later research will determine if students are as bored here at ENMU.

Future Careers

Student interest in medical careers reached an all-time high in the Fall 1994 survey, with 8.9 percent of freshmen indicating they planned on obtaining M.D. degrees. The number compares to 8.4 percent in 1993 and only 4.1 percent in 1969.

Only 4.9% of ENMU students reported the same aspiration, yet 8.5% of 1993 freshmen planned on obtaining M.D. degrees (though for most previous years, the proportion was just over 4.0%).

More women than men plan on medical degrees, which is a major switch since 1966 when men outnumbered women nearly four to one. And interest in engineering careers declined to its lowest point in 19 years.

Here at Eastern, women were much more interested in earning a medical degree (a ratio of 5:2). And at ENMU, interest in Engineering was at its highest level (4.5%), after declining for several years.

Financing College Education

Students increasingly are having to borrow in order to finance their college education. Reliance on college loans rose for the eighth time in the past 10 years, while reliance on Perkins loans, Stafford loans, and loans from other sources reached all-time highs.

The data for first-time freshmen at ENMU is not similar to the national trends. For the Perkins Loan, only 4% of participants in the eight years of CIRP Freshman Surveys indicated they expected funding. And though the percentage of students anticipating Stafford Loans was highest in several years (11.4%), this was lower than in 1987 and 1988 (13.9% and 16.1%, respectively).

"Considering these trends," says Astin, "it is not surprising to find that more students than ever are concerned about college finances." The percent of students who express doubt about their ability to pay for college reached an all-time high of 18.9 percent, compared to 17.4 percent in 1992 and 8.4 percent in 1968.

More than a third (34.5%) of ENMU students expressed their concern for affording higher education as "major" (an additional 45.5% reported that this concerned them somewhat).

Student Stress

"A number of other findings suggests that students are feeling increasingly stressed," Astin said. A record high percent of freshmen report that they have frequently "felt overwhelmed by all I have to do." A total of 24.1 percent report this type of stress, compared to 23.2 percent in 1993 and 16.0 percent in 1985. Consistent with this trend, the percent reporting that they frequently "felt depressed" increased for the fourth straight year.

Almost a third (32.8%) of ENMU first-time students in 1994 reported frequently feeling overwhelmed, much higher than 1993 (25.4%), and than the seven year average (23.8%). Though the proportion of students reporting feeling depressed (13.2%) did increase over 1993, the 1993 participants reported the fewest instances of feeling depressed. In comparison to the national trend, reports of depression among incoming students does not yet appear to follow a pattern.

Student Behavior

On the behavioral side, tobacco use is up and alcohol use is down. Those reporting frequent smoking rose for the sixth time in the past seven years, 12.5 percent compared to 9.1 percent in 1985. And those reporting drinking beer reached an all-time low of 53.2 percent, compared to 54.4 percent last year and 75.2 percent in 1981.

In 1994, 17.8% of ENMU freshmen reported frequently smoking (compared to the seven year average of 12.3%), and 66.7% reported drinking beer. There is again no discernible pattern regarding the cigarette smoking of ENMU students, though in 1987 fewer students reported drinking beer (68.9%).

Of the total students surveyed for this Fall's results, 237,777 questionnaires from 461 institutions were used to compute the 1994 national norms. They were statistically adjusted to represent the nation's population of approximately 1.54 million first-time entering college freshmen. Since 1966, more than 8 million students at more than 1,400 institutions have participated in the survey.

OBSERVATIONS/CONCLUSION: I don't necessarily suspect that I am any better prepared to summarize the aforementioned comparisons. Neither do I suspect that anyone else is going to step forward to do so. The opportunity to compare our students to national trends is, to me, an exciting one. And this exercise demonstrates what we perhaps al-

ready know (more and more I am learning that educational research supports what we intuitively know). We need to have counseling services and other forms of supports for our students....especially financial aid.

It surprised me that so few students anticipated applying for student loans when compared to the 80% of students who have at least some concern about affording higher education. This suggests, in my opinion, a lack of awareness by students of the types and availability of financial aid awards.

I'm also curious about how aware we (administrators, faculty, staff) are of students' feelings toward being overwhelmed. For many of us, it has been a long time since we had to face the challenges of an eighteen-year-old beginning college. Though we are familiar with the student lament, "my instructors assign coursework as if theirs was my only class," do we understand it?

Figures regarding political orientation and activism should be interpreted with extreme caution for two reasons. First, in a separate analysis, I discovered that students' self-reported views do not necessarily match their political orientation. For example, conservatives were as likely as liberals to support either pro-life or pro-choice points of view. In discussing these findings with staff at HERI, they reported that similar findings were seen in the national sample. Second, what outcomes regarding political orientation and activism are most desirable? Would the development of a firm set of beliefs be considered more ideal than a flexible point of view?

As I review CIRP Freshman Survey data, I am coming increasingly to the opinion that our students are not that unlike the national norm. Yes, there are differences, but not to the degree that we should believe they are uncommon.

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